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The Inquisitor, Plants a Garden

Kamazuki Suzuno lived in the sixty year old wooden apartment Sasazuka Villa Rosa's Room 202; and out of the three people who lived in the neighbouring Room 201, the one who she met the least was Urushihara Hanzou.

Basically, there was no need for him to leave the house nor did he have any intention of doing so. Considering these facts, the surprise of seeing him outside (even though it was said as such, it was just referring to the common corridor) was akin to that one would feel if they saw a bat flying around in broad daylight.

Because of this, Suzuno studied his appearance closely and realised something.

"Wha, what is it?"

Urushihara frowned unhappily as Suzuno looked him up and down, examining his entire body.

".....As I expected, I cannot be mistaken about this."

Suzuno finally spoke and he frowned even more.

"Lucifer, have you gained weight?"

".....Ha?"

Lately, the period of time when Urushihara started going out was the same as that when Maou started to have changes to his movements and Ashiya started carrying a phone.

Initially, as long as the angels did not attack, Urushihara would not leave the house, but seeing him going out and coming back like that, even if she had no obligation, was worrying.

"Gained weight.... that's not possible is it? Isn't it only the thicker clothing that's making me look fat?"

True, Japan, and Sasazuka along with it, had entered the winter season, and even though the economic situation of the Demon Fortress was as bad as usual, the residents had all made the switch to winter clothing.

Compared to Ashiya, Urushihara was closer in size to Maou so he borrowed much of Maou's clothing without permission. Suzuno knew that as well but Urushihara was currently wearing winter clothes that she had not seen before.

"No. I can't be wrong. There is something wrong with your face."

"Haa?!"

"No no, sorry about that. I meant to say that the outline of your face has changed. This part looks a lot rounder than before."

"....."

Urushihara frowned and touched his face with his hand but did not seem to have noticed anything.

"That kind of thing shouldn't be possible, should it? No matter what, there's no way I'd gain enough weight for you to notice within a week."

The period of time which Urushihara and Suzuno had not met was about a week.

Because of some circumstances, for that week, there were no gatherings for meals in Room 201.

Ever since Yusa Emi's workplace had changed to the MgRonalDs in front of Hatagaya station, Suzuno's, Maou's, and the other's circumstances changed greatly, and the number of meal gatherings which they were getting used to had decreased drastically. Shortly after that, Urushihara started going out.

When Suzuno had just arrived at this apartment, Urushihara was not a person who would go out actively.

Based upon his innate personality and the possibility of being target of the Japanese police, he had reasons to avoid trouble, but he started to go out more frequently as though those things did not matter.

Whether it was Suzuno or not, as long as it was someone who knew his usual attitude towards life, they would feel that something is off about such a large change.

However, since Urushihara's guardians, Maou and Ashiya, did not say anything, Suzuno did not feel that she should speak too much about her neighbour's situation and decided to keep quiet as though nothing had happened, however....

"Sariel-sama's weight also doubled in a week."

"That's because he gave some kind of offerings to the manager of MgRonalDs."

Urushihara laughed coldly.

"It's not as though I eat large amounts of high calorie food like he does. And this week, I went out on foot so that can be considered exercise. There's nothing that would cause me to gain weight."

"Oh....?"

However, Suzuno's eyes caught sight of the contents of the bag that Urushihara was holding in his hand.

"Even though I did not specifically ask about what you all are up to, lately, Alsiel would leave the house at dinner time."

"Eh?"

"You took Alsiel's outings as a great chance to buy what you like to eat right? I have been hearing the delivery motorcyle quite often."

"....."

Urushihara's gaze started drifting to the side.

It seemed that she was correct.

"Also, what did you buy? There are vegetables and snacks but it does not look that balanced."

".....What, even so, it has nothing to do with you."

"It does not have anything to do with me but I am still your neighbour. To be able to gain weight to the point that it is obvious to the naked eye in a week? I am worried about your diet and lifestyle, more importantly, this is not good for Alas=Ramus's education."

"Do you think I will listen to anything you say just because you drag Alas=Ramus into this?"

"If it's not enough to drag Alas=Ramus into this, then do you think Emilia and the Demon King will keep silent about this?"

"Ugh...."

Urushihara also knew that he could not go against Emi in terms of skill and he could not go against Maou in terms of his way of life.

Also, compared to all the people who gathered in this apartment, his opinion was the most disrespected.

(TL Note: Urushihara is aware of all the negativity others give him.)

"Well, I am to blame for saying such rude things upon meeting."

"Ah, I don't mind."

"So, since there's the opportunity, do you want to measure it?"

"Ha? Measure what?"

"Your weight of course. If you did not gain any, I will properly apologise."

".....Even if you say 'measure it', we don't have a scale in the house."

"I have one. It is a luxury product that can measure many things other than weight."

"Why did you buy something like that?"

"It is one of the many things I bought when I had just arrived here. Because it seems to be part of my duty to take care of health."

"Oh, then forget it. I don't want to be taken care of by you."

However, Urushihara had a face that showed that he thought the situation was extremely troublesome, shook his head at Suzuno, and entered the apartment.

"Is it? It doesn't matter if you think that this is not an issue to be concerned about, however."

At that moment, the door that was closing stopped moving.

"I am reminding you out of goodwill. It is not good for the body to change in such a short period of time. If something happened that required spending money to cover medical bills, right now while the money is all spent, what do you think Alsiel will say?"

".....I'll use demonic magic when that happens."

"If precious demonic magic is used to settle matters due to Lucifer not taking care of his health, I wonder if Alsiel will let the matter go."

The gap in the door opened a bit wider.

".....Is it that serious?"

"To the point where even your neighbour can see the difference."

Is it because he lost confidence in himself?

Urushihara looked out of the door through the gap and then lowered his head to look at the contents in the bag.

"...Well, since there won't be any loss, I will try it."

"Well, it definitely will not cause any loss if you took it."

"Why do you have the face that says that your scheming plans went through, it pisses me off!!"

"Hehehe, excuse me for that. Since it's such a rare chance, how about I lend you this for the whole day? If Alsiel and the Demon King can use it too, I will be even happier."

".....I really want to ask you back, what the heck are you so happy about?"

"Hm? Do you really have to ask?"

Suzuno laughed joyfully.

"To be able to analyse a demon's body using Japanese modern science. It is simply a decision made based on matters of scientific curiosity."

(TL Note: Suzuno, you only pay attention to Lucifer because he is basically a walking contradiction.)

"You sound like a mad scientist when you say that."

About ten minutes later, Suzuno brought the scale over. Its appearance was no different from the one that Urushihara usually saw at the changing area of the bath house.

"Oh, people really buy this kind."

It looked like a thin glass plane with a digital display and on top of it were four metal plates. Urushihara saw many similar products when he was surfing the internet.

Suzuno's weighing scale was a Yamaha product that quickly became well known in the field of cooking and nutrition. It seems to be able to measure weight as well as other values derived from the current condition of the body.

"I just have to step on it right?"

"Correct. Actually it can give more accurate numbers if you put in the height, but you have to step on it first. These metal plates measure using the body's electrical resistance. Take off your socks before stepping on it."

"Yes yes. Seriously..... it can't be anything awful anyway."

Then Urushihara obediently removed his socks.

No matter how he was to measure his weight, there was no way for him to only wear his underwear in front of Suzuno, so he only removed his upper clothing to the minimum level.

"So? How is it?"

Urushihara wanted to chase Suzuno back home and he stepped on the glass pane without caring if the scale was on or off.

His feet felt a cold sensation.

".....Hm?"

He naturally lowered his head to look down and happened to meet Suzuno's troubled expression as she looked upward.

"Hey, this....."

Suzuno pointed at the screen and frowned.

"What? It's not a big problem is it?"

".....Uh."

"Even though it's been awhile since I measured my weight at the bathhouse, this body is the same as how it looks, the measurement is in accordance to the standard of humans, there can't be...."

"It's too much, this thing."

"Is it a weird number..... ah?"

"Sixty five kilograms. Is that not considered a problem?"

Faced with Suzuno's stern expression.

"Is this, considered overweight?"

Urushihara was at a bit of a loss.

Urushihara was not acting stupid, he did not have an inkling of knowledge of a normal human's weight.

"It's obese."

And was therefore unable to make such a judgement.

"Obese, is, uh?"

"Even though I do not know your exact height, you are only a bit taller than me and there is nothing special about your build. Your weight is also abnormal. If I had to be blunt, someone might even suspect that you have a disease."

"Wait, wait, wait a minute!"

The unexpected declaration made Urushihara jump from the weighing scale frantically.

"Obese, how can that be?! Didn't you just say 'gained a bit of weight'?! Obese is even more...."

"Yes, that's right. Usually it's easier to see from the belly and the face if a person gained weight. Just like Sarii-sama not long ago. However, fat that cannot be seen is even worse than fat that can be seen."

"I don't even know what Sarii was like at that time....."

"The reason was because he ate too many McDonalds set meals every day for all three meals."

"How many is too many?"

"According to Chiho-dono, one meal was a portion for three people."

At that moment, Urushihara frowned.

"I also know that eating that much will cause weight gain! But the things that I eat, even if it's nothing that you or Ashiya would praise, I can't eat in such excess! Is this weighing scale broken?"

"Not possible. I did not buy it that long ago and even to today, it has never had an abnormal number."

"Then who knows!? New products also have faults, how in the world can you determine that it's not faulty?!"

"Do you really have to ask? I use it frequently myself and every time it has showed an acceptable number...."

"So what's your weight?"

"Me? It's fort..... ah, any, anyway! The result at the bathhouse and the result on this one basically doesn't have a large difference!

Suzuno almost went along with Urushihara's words and said it aloud, a slight blush formed on her face.

"Bu, but, you are a human right?! I'm a demon! Since I'm different from Maou and Ashiya, there is little change in my external appearance and who knows, it might have caused some measurement error! This measures based on some electrical resistance, right? I don't know if my insides are the same as a human's, in fact, this might be the ideal weight for a demon!"

(TL Note: lol....we all know angels are essentially human....)

"That might be true for values other than weight, however you are indeed sixty five kilograms, that is an indisputable fact."

".....Lo, look, I'm still wearing clothes, if I take it all off..."

(TL Note: Please do, I mean please don't.)

"Do you think your usual clothing is armour?"

Suzuno's logical argument made Urushihara's tone a bit weaker.

"I am also not sure about the average weight of a demon. Besides, your weight may be normal, but for a human, that is an unacceptable number. If you want to eat on your own later, you had better consider what you should eat."

"....."

Urushihara listened to Suzuno with a dark look on his face and finally let out a surprised expression.

"Right, Bell, let me borrow this for today."

"Hmm?"

When Maou and Ashiya come back, I'll let them measure themselves as well. Then we can know what is up with my number."

"Well, that's alright with me, but the three of you are demons from different clans, right?"

"It's not as though there is anyone else I can compare to. Anyway today...."

Urushihara glanced at the shopping bag that was placed on the ground.

".....for now, I will just make my own meal. If it's just for myself, I still can make a little."

Even though he said as such, he actually minded the situation very much.

And then, that night.

"You've got to be kidding me?!"
Suzuno heard Urushihara's cry of despair.

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The next day at eleven in the morning, Suzuno heard the doorbell and walked to the entrance, she then saw Urushihara standing there with the weighing scale and looking extremely troubled.

"What is it. It's still morning isn't it?"

"I couldn't sleep, it's too shocking."

"Hmm?"

Suzuno tilted her head and Urushihara roughly shoved the weighing scale to Suzuno.

"Maou is 65 kilograms, Ashiya is 72 kilograms."

"Hmm, well, those should be optimal values. For Alsiel's height, it would be better if he was a bit heavier, but what happened?"

"....Going by the difference between my height and Maou's height, it's weird that there is no difference in weight, no matter what."

"Well, that's true."

There is about a ten centimeter height difference between Maou and Urushihara.

(TL Note: 10 cm only? I thought it was 17 cm....)

Even if one took into account such a strange matter of demons losing their demonic magic and taking on the form of a human, there was no weight difference between Maou and Urushihara. By human standards, it was a large problem.

"Then? What do you want to do?"

".....I already do not know what to do, so I just thought of returning this scale to you first."

For Urushihara, this was a cowardly declaration that was worth praising.

Usually, Urushihara would let others who reprimanded him about his carelessness towards his health fall on deaf ears but it seemed like he was unable to accept such numbers.

"If you are so concerned, just change your diet and lifestyle, or just try to restrict your diet and you should be fine?"

"I do not know how to do those things that you are referring to so I am troubled."

"Ha?"

Suzuno clamped the weighing scale under her arm and tilted her head.

"If you search this up on the internet, won't there be many methods?"

"I can't find any."

"Is it?"

Even though Suzuno did not need to say it, Urushihara had started to become immensely worried about his own weight and started searching for information on the internet.

However,

“There’s too much misinformation, you can’t even tell what is right anyway. It just feels that every hit is suspicious and lacking a scientific backing....”

It’s true that the diet knowledge going around the internet was full of biases.

However, despite it being that way, there should have been many guides on how to restricted calorie intake, ways to adjust the lifestyle, what kind of food that has more sugar and needs to be restricted, and what kinds of exercises should be done to slim down certain areas.

(Editor’s Note: Even Wagahara is spreading misinformation. Just exercising say your arms will not burn the fat in your arms, only develop muscles. Exercising in general burns the stored calories. T/N: Wagahara, like most people, is confused between toning certain areas with slimming down certain areas.)

“Isn’t it alright to just give all those methods a try? You have time anyway.”

“Don’t make it sound so easy. Firstly, the net is full of so much information on dieting and, based on that, wouldn’t that mean that the world is full of diet information that is wrong and untrustworthy?”

“Lucifer, you.....”

Suzuno felt helpless from the bottom of her heart.

“You are not very good at finding excuses for your lack of hard work, are you?”

“Ha?!”

“It’s still alright if you come to complain if you tried those methods and there were no results..... thinking about it normally, one becomes fat because the caloric intake exceeds the expenditure, if you want to stay slim, you need to cut down on the intake and increase the use of calories, even children can understand such logic.”

“That I will agree but I already said that I don’t eat that much! If I became fat, then isn’t it weird that Acies doesn’t?!”

Acies=Ara was a freeloader who stayed at the the landlady’s, Shiba Miki’s, house which was on the plot of land next to this apartment. Her appearance was that of a middle school girl but her appetite was at a level that could not be matched even by adding the appetites of the three men who resided at the Demon Fortress together.

She and Maou’s and Emi’s ‘daughter’ Alas=Ramus were children who were born from the same Yesod fragment. It was not known why she looked that way but it was simply difficult to consider this young girl’s diet as healthy.

“Because Acies frequently goes out to walk around. She never seems to rest, so she burns more calories than most people in her day to day life.”

“Even if it’s me, in that week when I did not see you, I went out often to walk around too, you know?!”

“Well, about that.....”

Suzuno closed her eyes and she finally thought of something.

“Age, maybe?”

“Ah? Ahhhh?”

“Don’t you say it quite often? You’ve lived many more years longer than the Demon King and Alsiel?”

“Yes, so wha....”

“That would mean, in demon standards, if I thought about your situation with the standards of a middle aged man, many things would make sense.”

“You are not allowed to think that!!”

Having excessive weight may lead to hypertension and heart disease and based on how high the excessive fat was, perhaps diabetes and many other organ disease will be associated as well.

Other than that, weight gain may bring about joint pain in the legs and hips.

“Hm, I see, that means you do realise that this is a crisis?”

Suzuno hugged her elbows and nodded her head.

“But there are no other possibilities. Acies is still very young so her metabolism is faster, if she exercises, she won’t become fat. Lucifer already has a middle aged body and eats a fair amount of junk food and doesn’t exercise, the accumulation of these bad habits.....”

“Wait a minute, do not make it sound so realistic!!”

Urushihara forcefully stopped Suzuno from continuing her theory.

“I never heard of demons getting metabolic syndromes at middle age! Furthermore, I’m half an angel, right?!”

“Your appearance is closer to a human’s than an angel’s. I think there might possibly be many aspects that can be explained appropriately with human reasoning.”

“Even though it sounds reasonable, it is completely lacking any basis of science!”

“You, who are a demon and I, who can use spells, should not be talking about science in Japan.”

Suzuno shrugged her shoulders while saying “Eyah eyah.”

“So?

“So..... what do you mean?”

“Does this mean anything? What do you hope for me say? You have already come to the realisation of yourself possibly being fat, what do you hope I can do?”

“Even though that is correct, the way you say it still pisses people off.”

“However, since you still said these kinds of things while returning the weighing scale to me, that means you hope that I can give you some kind of advice, right?”

“.....”

At this moment, Urushihara frowned as a feeling of reluctance welled up from the bottom of his heart.

“I thought that maybe you would know some efficient dieting method.”

“That’s not the face you should be making when requesting for help. Anyway, do you really intend to go on a diet?”

"After all, I saw Maou's and Ashiya's values and felt a sense of crisis. And you even said diseases and all that so I thought I should understand a bit more."

"I see. Let me just say this beforehand, the knowledge and methods that I know are not methods to rapidly decrease the weight but ways to modify the lifestyle and to slowly improve the body's condition."

"Eh? What's that? That means there is no way to lose weight quickly?"

"Yes. If you do not take the time to do it, there is no way you can lose weight in a healthy manner, you understand that, don't you?"

"This..... well. But.... spending time sounds troublesome....."

Suzuno already predicted that Urushihara would reply as such and had already prepared threats.

"If you are talking about the Heretic inquisition group's method of losing weight, it won't take that much time. However, I cannot guarantee what your health will be like later on."

If one thought of Suzuno's previous occupation, one could treat it as being the same as an interrogation in the style of the Heretic inquisition.

Imprisonment, starvation. These horrible words surfaced in Urushihara's mind.

Seeing Urushihara's stiffened face, Suzuno also relaxed her expression a little.

"So, if you start from adjusting your lifestyle, it will not cause too large of a burden on your body. Although it will take quite a bit of time, if you are able to maintain an excellent and healthy state, other than that, you can expect some additional benefits."

"Additional benefits? I don't know what you are referring to but, if you know these methods, teach them to me."

After that, Suzuno unexpectedly raised her eyebrows and shook her head.

"On what basis?"

"On what basis..... you mean.....?"

"I do not have any reason to be obliged to teach you such things."

"Haa?! We already reached this stage of the conversation, what's the meaning of such a tone?!"

Urushihara was shocked to be rejected by such a cold tone but the other party, Suzuno intentionally frowned and said, "You seem to forget, you and I are enemies right?"

"You..... actually say those things at this kind of moment...."

Even though enemies would not lend out their weighing scales in normal circumstances, Urushihara was not an idiot and he could guess that if he wanted Suzuno to teach him a way to diet, she would probably lay out some conditions.

"I have issues too. If word gets out that I am taking care of the health of the enemy of humans, I would have no way to explain such things to Emilia and Emerada-dono."

"You really know how to pick the right moments..... so what do you want me to do."

Urushihara's voice was fierce and Suzuno seems to be delighted about it, she broke into a smile and nodded her head hard in a satisfied manner.

“It’s a great help that you understood so quickly.”

“.....What, are these things?”

Suzuno brought Urushihara to Sasazuka’s Hyakugodori shopping street and stuffed a bunch of things into his arms and they walked together on the street.

“The things you need for your diet.”

“Ha? I don’t understand what you are saying.”

It was understandable why Urushihara would say something like that.

“No matter how you look at these, they are only tools for farming.”

“They are indeed farming tools, what else could they be?”

“.....I really don’t understand you.”

Shovels, spades, pick axes, hoes, a rake, and so on.

It was already tiring enough for Urushihara to carry those things while walking. Meanwhile Suzuno was carrying bags of unknown soil and fertiliser.

“Are you intending to starting planting a vegetable garden?”

“You are absolutely correct.”

“What does that have to do with my diet?”

“I will explain when we get back.”

Urushihara felt that no matter what, it was something that would make him move a lot and when he went back to the apartment, he confirmed this idea.

“Why do I have to help out with your gardening hobby?! Isn’t this the backyard of the apartment?! Is it even okay to just do these kinds of things?!!”

“I have received permission from the landlady. Also, the first step in the style of the church, no, the convent’s style of modifying someone’s life is from ploughing the soil.”

“Ha?!”

“You need to make sure the land is arable. This isn’t the first time you’ve encountered the agricultural life. Well, if you want to lose weight, you need to make your body move.”

“What the heck, seriously!”

The three people residing in the Demon Fortress all had experience with farming, but it was only at the level of helping to harvest crops under the guidance of professionals.

They had never once touched the soil.

"If you don't let your body move, you won't be able to lose weight while maintaining your health. Even those reports that you said had no scientific basis also never said anything like 'you completely do not have to exercise' right?"

"Tha, that's true....."

"Ente Isla's western continent does not have abundant food like Japan. So, even though habits and thoughts like dieting do not exist deep in the hearts of citizens, the oldest son of royalty or their third son or something might occasionally train themselves hard before entering the Knights."

"Oh."

"The so-called third young master of royalty basically means people who have been spoiled. I think it's quite alike."

".....I won't ask who is alike."

Urushihara made a hmph sound and then reluctantly picked up a random tool from the large amount of gardening tools piled together in the backyard.

"Then, what do you want me to do?"

"First, get rid of the weeds. Then carefully pick up the pebbles and branches. After that, we can start work."

Urushihara looked at the area that Suzuno pointed out and his expression turned sour as though he was going to collapse on the spot.

"Nope, I'm at my limit."

"What, it's only removing weeds and picking some stones and you're sweating so much already?"

Urushihara sat with a thump next to the wall and started wiping off his sweat while panting.

"An appropriate level of farming can be considered a full body exercise. Although you can't make a rice plantation here, I heard that farmers can carry a straw bag of rice alone."

"How heavy is that?"

"About sixty kilograms."

"That can't be real, it's not as though it's weight lifting. If it's that heavy, the cartilage in the joints will collapse."

"You are a Demon general, a mere sixty kilograms of weight is nothing to be afraid of. Well, there's no time for rest. The autumn days are short. Continue picking up the pebbles."

".....Seriously, how many pebbles are there in such a small area anyway. Is it really necessary to pick away all the pebbles that carefully?"

"One small stone can destroy a sapling. It's better to remove the pebbles the best you can."

As long as there is one small stone in the field, it will cause changes to the direction the stem grows, causing the root vegetables to grow in a distorted shape and damage the crops' stems.

When preparing the land, it was never overdoing it to carefully remove the stones.

"If it's too tough, you can give up you know? I like doing this kind of gardening anyway."

“.....No, I want to do it.”

Even though Urushihara complained, he still obediently followed Suzuno.

“.....Actually, this kind of job can make the body move a lot. Whether I’m speaking as a human or a demon, I feel that my body has become a bit dull.”

“Oh?”

“I do not think that I have hit middle age or I can get obesity syndromes like humans. In the first place, that kind of thing isn’t even possible.”

“You sure are confident about that.”

“I guess you can say that. But I might still get things like joint pain and if something should happen, I do not want to have trouble flying..... it’s just that, jobs at the level of a gardening hobby that will not bring too much burden to the body, there aren’t a lot of them are there? It’s not as though we can expand the area every day.”

“Well, it’s good that you are motivated. The key is to make these actions a habit.”

“Make them a habit?”

“Yes.”

Suzuno also wiped the sweat from her brow and surveyed the area that essentially had all its weeds and pebbles removed.

“Of course, we only have to plough the soil at the beginning. However, in order to let the crops grow properly, watering is a must, as well as getting rid of weeds and pests and laborious work such as adding fertiliser and so on. Make your future actions into habits and change your lifestyle, that is the goal for now.”

“I think that that’s not that drastic of a change.”

“That may be true. For a member of royalty who doesn’t work any decent job, the amount of work involved here does not seem large, so it’s hard for them to find any meaning in it, however....”

Suzuno emphasized the term ‘royalty’ and retrieved several small packets from the shopping bag left at the corner of the backyard.”

“The effects brought to others due to a narrow viewpoint, this kind of thing is truly despicable.”

Suzuno looked at the plant seeds to plant in this vegetable garden.

It was already the middle of winter and most would assume that it was not the right environment for gardening. But in fact, there are a wide variety of crops that can be grown in the autumn and winter months.

“If there’s about half a year’s worth of time, it’s probably possible to get about two harvests out of a garden of this scale. So most likely I will feel unresigned.”

“Unresigned?”

“Yeah. Compared to the other fellow’s fields, the one in my own fields have a worse harvest, something like that.”

“Oh?”

“As long as the personality is not warped to a certain degree, normally, there won’t be anyone who considers it good to produce a poor harvest. If they see someone who has done the same things and yet has a higher production, they will feel even more so. And they will become even more serious than ever to go into agriculture.”

To engage in work more seriously was closely knitted to the habits in their day to day life and this was able to change the usual actions in a day.

“So it’s spurring the flames of competition?”

“In conclusion, it is like that. Just to mention, the main crop in winter are things like tubers, if you forget to get rid of the stones in deeper layers of the soil, it tends to affect the shape of the tubers or damage the crops.”

“Tubers.... that means potatoes right? What, you plan to grow potatoes here?”

“No, that has to wait till mid-winter. And since this field is to be left to Lucifer, it will be better to start from easier things. Things like arugula are expensive in the supermarket but they are easy to grow and can withstand the cold quite well so it’s a suitable vegetable for amateurs.”

“Oh, right. Sometimes pizza has arugula on top..... hmm?”

“Anyway, these two days, you just have to till the soil for a bit. And for a garden of this scale, you don’t have to spend a lot of effort watering it.”

“Wait a moment Bell, you just said some strange....”

“How about you plant the arugula in flower pots first? If you find out any faults in the croppings and just plant the foliage into the ground, its appearance would....”

“Bell? Left to me, what is that supposed to mean?”

“Well, this ground was just full of wild grass anyway. It would be inefficient to let the soil rest after a single harvest.”

“Bell— Oi— ? How long do I have to help you out—?”

Suzuno was immersed in looking between the seeds and the soil and she did not notice what Urushihara was saying.

“Oi, Bell!”

“Hm? Ah ah my apologies. What is it?”

“You still have the gall to ask me ‘What is it’?! What do you mean by leaving it to me?!”

“Exactly as how I said it.”

“Exactly as how you said it refers to.....?”

“Didn’t I say so just now? You have to readjust your lifestyle so this piece of land is now Lucifer’s job.”

“Eh.”

The word ‘job’ caused Urushihara’s expression to stiffen.

“Treat this job in the backyard as part of your life. I shall say the unpleasant things first. This is not something which can be handled simply by watering. You have to get rid of the weeds and things like aphids and cabbage moths, diligently monitor the growth of the plants, and occasionally add on the fertiliser. There is much to do. Let me warn you, you are not allowed to back out because the initial investment came out of my pocket.”

“.....Is this really going to help with weight loss?”

“Like I said. You have to change your lifestyle. If you repeat the actions of squatting and standing in this plot to take care of your crops, it will help both your physical and mental health and you can even get food as well. It’s an extremely perfect habit.”

“.....”

Urushihara was unable to link taking care of a garden with dieting in his mind.

And no matter how he thought, this was the result of Suzuno’s interest and he was only being ordered around to be her manual worker.

“Programs advertising highly efficient ways to lose weight are shown on television sometimes, aren’t they?”

“Hm?”

Afterwards, Suzuno suddenly steered the conversation in a strange direction.

“When you are watching television while cooking, you can see many programs which advertise things like ‘If you exercise a little every day, you can lose weight healthily.’”

“.....I think I know what you do during your free time.”

Just not too long ago, Suzuno still had some misunderstanding about the various aspects of the Japanese life. Now she understood the structure of television programs to the finest detail.

In the past, Urushihara was verbally attacked with the phrase “Even though they are both jobless, a person who helps out at home and a NEET are poles apart”. But once he heard such a fact from the person who helps out at home, there were many things he could not accept.

“However, there are very few people on earth who successfully lose weight with health as their goal. Even those people with metabolic disorders who lose weight at a speed that can be seen by the naked eye don’t set their health as a goal. Why do you think that is the case?”

“Ha..... isn’t it because there is no meaning to it in the end?”

“Not at all. It’s because they all gave up.”

Suzuno looked at the inside of the seed pouches while pointing at the soil and used her fingers to count the number of ridges ploughed.

“To do a bit a day is simple. I’ve heard these kinds of words a lot but the reality is there are too few people who can persist in doing a certain task for a few minutes every day. Therefore, a large portion of people who try to lose weight do not succeed. And because the majority do not succeed, similar programs are shown over and over again.”

“.....Oh.”

“The reason for not being able to engage in exercise regularly even though it’s so important is simple. Even if it’s a task that only requires a bit of your time, in the end it will become a painful restriction. Exercising and restricting your food takes time, energy, and willpower. Even if only ten minutes of your time is required per day, it will be extremely difficult to just keep at it. Of course, people with a strong will who succeed in the end definitely exist, but not everyone has that kind of determination. So...”

Bringing her speech to this point, Suzuno stood in front of Urushihara and handed the shovel she just bought over.

“Do not let losing weight be your goal and make it a habit to move your body in order to have a future where you can benefit and enjoy. Make it a habit to enjoy gardening and you will reap its rewards. It is already enjoyable just to be able to harvest a crop that you have taken care of with your own hands. Even if you fail, you will be inspired with the thought ‘I can succeed the next time’. There is also a practical reason that cannot be overlooked and that is to make it your interest and improve the impression you have on others. And in this process where you create results that can be seen by your own eyes, where you take interest in the condition of your body and how you see the world, exercises such as using these tools, squatting and standing up, and lifting heavy objects are all included. Well, for something of this scale, thirty minutes a day should be enough.”

“.....”

Urushihara took the shovel and stood up with a complex expression on his face.

“Of course, there is still the basic step of rethinking your meals, but rather than doing exercise at a scale that will harm yourself, it is better to just develop a new habit.

“Who knows if this will even work.”

No matter what had been said, Urushihara just thought that Suzuno was trying to fool him with flamboyant words but he was also not able to say ‘it’s definitely impossible’ to reject the other party. Furthermore, he did not have any evidence to refute what Suzuno said.

“I also said that there are benefits attached, right? Compared to losing weight, I think that these benefits will appear even faster.”

“Well, I understand. Anyway, it’s getting dark, if there is something I need to do, then tell me what to do now.”

“.....True. Then just toss the soil a bit. Tomorrow we can plant the seeds.”

“Ehn.”

Afterwards, the two toiled in the backyard till the sun set and tilled the small plot of land, just a bit narrower than the size of six tatami mats, together.



The next morning, when Suzuno, who just woke up, opened the windows to ventilate the room.

“Hmm?”

She realised that in the backyard below her window, there was a small figure with purple hair squatting on the soil that they had just ploughed the day before.

“The additional benefits appeared so quickly.”

Suzuno swiftly changed her clothes and walked to the backyard. Urushihara heard her footsteps, raised his head, and looked at her with an unusual expression. After greeting her, he immediately said something.

“Eh.... it’s only been a night and the weeds grew so quickly, it’s a bit frightening.”

Clamped between Urushihara’s fingers was a weed that was even smaller than a person’s nail.

“Yes. Eighty percent of farming is battling with weeds.”

“I remember that someone said such a thing before—”

Urushihara thought back to the summer days where he was dragged to help out when a woman from a farmer's house said such a thing and he nodded lightly. Afterwards, he mumbled in a soft voice.

".....Ashiya, he...."

"Hmm?"

"...actually praised me in a frank manner."

"Is that so?"

Suzuno smiled and Urushihara turned his face away, embarrassed.

"Even though he also said a lot of unnecessary things and said that I should lie to you and bring more of the harvests back once they have grown."

"That's just like Alsiel."

Suzuno nodded and passed the plastic bag she had in her hand over to him.

"Next time, put the weeds that have grown in there or they will re-root themselves and revive. Even though you have to put in a bit more effort, for a garden like this, it's better to treat them as combustible garbage."

"...I understand."

It was not even half a day since they had made this plot.

And the weeds had not gotten a grip on the ground.

Even so, Urushihara still woke up early on his own volition to pluck the weeds.

It was a small yet huge improvement.

Of course, since it was Urushihara, it could not be guaranteed that it was a only a passion that lasted for a short while but, even if it was a short while, it was far better than doing nothing.

"Whether you can take more back after the harvest will be dependent on how hard you work. Even though I have discussed with Landlady-dono ways to expand the area, a garden does not only have benefits. Stray cats, wild birds, and insects could be attracted. And since the apartment does not only consist of us, we have to be careful about these things."

"I understand this but don't forget that I am only helping you out to lose weight."

"That's a given. If there is a need, the next time Emilia and Chiho-dono come by and everyone is having dinner together, I will bring along low calorie foods that will make you feel full more easily."

"Ashiya already told me that I have to eat those kinds of things regularly."

Even though Suzuno was tempted the retort with 'don't you have the ability to make your own decisions', the difficult process of planting the seeds to change the habit of leading an overnourished life in Urushihara's mind was just about complete. It would be a pity to let him give up because he felt it was troublesome to do even this.

"Well, if I have to do that for you regularly, I will have to consider getting payment from you."

"What?"

The two then continued to get rid of weeds, toss the soil, and plant the seeds in silence. When that was all done, the autumn sun was already high in the sky.

“Hey.”

The three short ridges in the backyard started taking the appearance of a plantation, and then a voice came from the second floor.

“I made lunch. Take a break and come back to eat.”

Hearing Ashiya’s voice, Urushihara and Suzuno raised their hands to show that they heard him. About ten minutes later, the two stopped their work temporarily and went upstairs to eat the lunch which mainly consisted of the low calorie menu that Ashiya had prepared for Urushihara.